



ACT Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Sector

Reconciliation Working Group

The ACT alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) sector is committed to advancing reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians; and to improving its cultural competency and the cultural security of its practice.

Terms of Reference (March 2012)

1. About Reconciliation

Reconciliation is based on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians coming to an honest understanding of our shared history, a commitment to building cooperative partnerships based on trust and respect and a recognition of the distinctive rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.¹

Reconciliation can be different things to different people, communities and sectors. There are two sides of reconciliation - the symbolic and the action-oriented:

“The symbolic side is enormously important. There must be a respect for Indigenous cultural identity and spiritual beliefs; an acknowledgement of the tragic history since white settlement, including dispossession from land and family, loss of identity, heritage, culture and language and poor treatment by a variety of institutions; and recognition of Indigenous rights stemming from the unique status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the first Australians, the original occupants and custodians of this land.

Equally, action plans leading to greater social justice for Indigenous Australians are essential. There must be a renewed effort to address the serious disadvantage of Indigenous people in all key sectors, including health, education, housing, employment and community justice. There also must be a commitment to work towards fuller participation of Indigenous people in the economic, political, cultural and social life of the nation.”²

- Mr Gus Nossal, Former Deputy Chair of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and Australia of the Year

To keep the reconciliation process moving forward, a number of groups, including the Social Justice Commissioner and Reconciliation Australia, are working together to set performance ‘benchmarks’ and frameworks to support the monitoring and implementation of reconciliation principles and actions within government and non-

government settings. In the ACT, the ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) has had a key leadership role in developing tools and building capacity in reconciliation.

Reconciliation is an action driven commitment by all Australians as individuals, communities and organisations.

2. What does ATOD have to do with Reconciliation?

Reconciliation Australia, with input from the National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee (NIDAC), have stated:

“People who engage in risky substance use isolate themselves from their friends, families and communities. Reconciliation is about everyone standing on comparable terms and having a fair go—it’s also about working together to make our communities safe and happy environments where everyone has the chance to achieve their dreams. It is about proving that, given the right capacity, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are capable and valued members of a modern Australia.”³⁴

Within that context, reconciliation and culturally secure practices have particular resonance for ACT ATOD services in recognition of the need for deliberate actions to address the specific wants and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities affected by ATOD.

3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and ATOD

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to suffer a greater burden of ill health than the rest of the population. 2011 data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare indicates that:⁵

Smoking

Smoking rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remain high, but recent data show that there has been some decline:

- In 2008, approximately half the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults (49.9%) were current smokers—more than double the rate for the rest of the population.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote areas smoked at higher rates (51%) than those in non-remote areas (46%) in 2008.
- The first statistically significant decline in smoking rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was seen between 2002 and 2008, from 53% to about 50% respectively.
- More than half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers (51%) smoked during pregnancy in 2008, and this rate remained relatively stable over the period between 2001 and 2008.

Alcohol consumption

A higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people abstain from both alcohol use and harmful drinking. The data shows that:

- In 2008, nearly three in ten (29%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

did not drink in the last 12 months—almost double the rate of the rest of the population (15%).

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were twice as likely as the rest of the population to binge drink (17% and 8% respectively) in 2004-05.
- The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (15%) and other Australians (14%) who drank at long-term (chronic), risky or high-risk levels was similar in 2008.
- Alcohol consumption patterns for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people varied by sex In 2008, with a higher proportion of men than women drinking alcohol, and consuming it at risky levels.
- There was a decline in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who abstained from alcohol between 2002 (31%) and 2008 (27%).

Illicit substance use

About a quarter (23%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had recently used an illicit substance while just over four in ten (43%) reported that they had used at least one illicit substance in their lifetime. That data shows that:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males are more likely than females to have used an illicit substance in the last 12 months (28% compared with 17%).
- Cannabis was the most common substance used, followed by amphetamines or speed.
- More than half (51%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males reported that they had ever used illicit substances compared with 36% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females.
- The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people reporting that they had used illicit substances remained the same between 2002 and 2008.
- The provision of culturally secure ATOD policies, programs and services are essential in seeking to redress health inequities.

3. Steps towards reconciliation and developing culturally secure ATOD programs

Organisational contexts of reconciliation

Reconciliation Action Plans (or RAPs) are about turning good intentions into real actions. A RAP is a business plan that uses an holistic approach to create meaningful relationships and sustainable opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.⁶

It is acknowledged that many ACT ATOD services and programs sit within larger organisations. Therefore, the development and implementation of RAPs may sit outside the scope of an individual ATOD program to lead. Different organisations that run ATOD programs are at different stages in this process. Further, it has been identified that some organisation's across the government and non-government sectors have developed RAPs but that some of the actions may not have reached the ATOD program level.

Implementing the Cultural Awareness Self-Assessment Toolkit

Therefore, the approach of the Reconciliation Working Group is to support ATOD programs to specifically take action within their organisational development context of reconciliation. This means that all programs can participate in this process regardless of where the organisation is in terms of their RAP.

Through the Reconciliation Working Group each ATOD program will develop a workplan to implement ACTCOSS' *Cultural Awareness Self-Assessment Toolkit* (www.actcoss.org.au/publications/Publications_2009/2109PAP.pdf). This toolkit, developed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Reconciliation Australia, maps with Reconciliation Action Plans. Therefore, if an organisation already has a RAP, then the Group will support its implementation; and if an organisation is considering the development of a RAP the Group will feed into those processes when the organisation is ready.

This process will also enable the sector to identify some ATOD specific actions that relate to field, such as implementing the Indigenous Risk Impact Screen which is the only validated comorbidity screening tool for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia.

The group's work would be facilitated by both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other facilitators through ACTCOSS and supported by ATODA.

5. Purpose of the group

The primary aim of the group is to provide a structured and supportive forum for the development and implementation of reconciliation and culturally secure practices within ATOD services. The group seeks to:

- Host regular workshops.
- Create a safe, positive and collaborative forum for development and change and to share ideas, successes and challenges.
- Collaborate with ACTCOSS and their Gulanga Program to support the working group.
- Implement ACTCOSS' Cultural Awareness Self-Assessment Toolkit within all Health Directorate funded ATOD programs, through which Reconciliation Action Plans can be developed or implementation supported.
- Engage with and strengthen linkages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations, including Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation, Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service, the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm and Reconciliation Australia
- Conduct and engage in other activities as identified by the group.

6. Term

The group will convene from May 2012 for an initial 6 meetings.

7. Member Roles

Members of the group will:

- Attend meetings.
- Collaborate with ACTCOSS and its Gulanga Program to facilitate and support the work of the group.
- Implement the cultural awareness self-assessment toolkit in each of their Health Directorate funded ATOD program/s.
- Contribute to regular reports to the ACT ATOD Executive Directors Group and other key stakeholders.
- Support the engagement with and consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the development of this work.
- Communicate information the group's activities within organisations, programs and the sector.
- Participate in other activities as determined by the group and through consultation with stakeholders.

8. Membership

Membership of the group is made up of at least one nominated individual from each mainstream ACT Government Health Directorate funded ATOD program, including

- Alcohol and Drug Service, ACT Government Health Directorate
- Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT (ATODA)
- AOD Policy Unit, ACT Government Health Directorate
- Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy
- Canberra Recovery Service, Salvation Army
- DIRECTIONS ACT
- Karralika Programs Inc
- Lesley's Place, Marzenna and WIREDD, Toora Women Inc
- Sobering Up Shelter and Grogwatch, CatholicCare Canberra and Goulburn
- Ted Noffs Foundation ACT

Other services will be engaged in the group as required, including Gagan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation and Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Services.

9. Facilitation and support

ACTCOSS and the Gulanga Program will support the Reconciliation Working Group. Each participating service equitably contributes to the costs associated with accessing this expertise.

10. Chair

ATODA will act as chair of the group.

11. Meeting Frequency and Venue

Meetings are held:

- on an as needs basis, to be determined by group members, with an aim of three meetings a year
- at the ACTCOSS Office (1/6 Gritten Street, Weston) or an alternative venue may be identified as required.

12. Secretariat and Support

ATODA will provide secretariat and support to the group, including meeting agenda, minutes and other papers, the primary contact is:

Carrie Fowlie, Executive Officer, carrie@atoda.org.au or (02) 6255 4070

www.atoda.org.au

References:

¹ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. *Social justice and human rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*. Accessed March 2012 from: http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/info_sheet.html

² New South Wales Reconciliation Council. *What is reconciliation?* Accessed March 2012 from: <http://www.nswreconciliation.org.au/what-is-reconciliation>

³ Reconciliation Australia (2010) *Drug and alcohol use by Indigenous people*. Accessed March 2012 from: <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/resources/factsheets/q-a-factsheets/drug-and-alcohol-use-by-indigenous-people>

⁴ For further information about NIDAC visit: www.nidac.org.au

⁵ Excerpt from Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2011) *Substance use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*. Canberra: AIHW.

⁶ Reconciliation Australia (2012) *Reconciliation Action Plans*. Accessed March 2012 from: <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/reconciliation-action-plans>